ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA

H. V. R. Iengar

A HISTORICAL REVIEW

BHARATIYA VIDYA BHAVAN

ABOUT THE BOOK

"In these lectures, Shri Iengar has broadly dealt with the administration under the Gupta Empire, during the Moghul, the Mahratta and British periods and the post-Independence period. He has laid stress—and rightly—on the multifarious tasks which devolved on the administrative officers in the post-Independent India due to the developmental activities of a welfare State which posed problems entirely different from those which faced the old regimes. Of particular interest is his detailed analysis of the intricate and sophisticated machinery of administration set out in Kautilya's *Artha-Shastra* .....

Shri Iengar emphasizes what is patent to everyone who knows anything about administration, the steady deterioration in the administration during the post-Independence period, largely due to interference by politicians. It has vitiated the administration at all levels, corroded discipline and undermined respect for law and order.

If we are to progress at all and hope to achieve progress on sound lines, nothing should be done to affect the stability and incorruptibility of the services, but instead encourage them to carry out honestly and fearlessly the problems of a democratic country. In this respect, one can do no better than emulate the attitude of Ministers in Great Britain towards the permanent Services."

—From the Foreword by
Dr. K.M. Munshi

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A HISTORICAL REVIEW

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By

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FOREWORD

I am happy to write a foreword to this book by my friend, Shri H. V. R. Iengar, with whom I have intimate contacts for over thirty years.

As a member of the Indian Civil Service, which has had such a brilliant record, he has held several offices in the undivided Province of Bombay in the thirties and early forties and has varied and intimate experience of administration at various levels.

When I first knew him through a common friend, he was, I believe, the Assistant Collector in my home district of Broach.

When the first Congress Ministry came into power in undivided Bombay, headed by Shri B. G. Kher (1937-39)—of which I was the Home Minister—Shri Iengar was the Finance Secretary and I admired the efficiency and competence with which he discharged his duties.

Later he moved to the Centre and functioned successfully as Home Secretary, Principal Secretary to the Prime Minister, and Secretary to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

However, it was as the Secretary of the Constituent Assembly that he found an opportunity to display his vast talent and his constructive political outlook, associated with personal charm. After retiring from Government service, he became the chairman of the State Bank of India and then Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. Later he joined private business in which he found ample scope for his immense experience as an administrator.

The Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan is grateful to him for having accepted its invitation to deliver three lectures on "Administration in India—A Historical Review", towards the end of 1966, in the series "Birla Endowment Lectures on Indian History". These three lectures are now published in this book.

In these lectures, Shri Iengar has broadly dealt with the administration under the Gupta Empire, during the Moghul, the Mahratta and British periods and the post-Independence period. He has laid stress —and rightly—on the multifarious tasks which devolved on the administrative officers in the post-Independent India due to the developmental activities of a welfare State which posed problems entirely different from those which faced the old regimes. Of particular interest is his detailed analysis of the intricate and sophisticated machinery of administration set out in Kautilya's *Artha-Shastra*. It is with regret that one notes that the sound principles of administration envisaged by Kautilya have been set at nought by the policy-makers of the present generation.

Shri Iengar emphasizes what is patent to everyone who knows anything about administration, the steady deterioration in the administration during the post-Independence period, largely due to interference by politicians. It has vitiated the administration at all levels, corroded discipline and undermined respect for law and order.

If we are to progress at all and hope to achieve progress on sound lines, nothing should be done to affect the stability and incorruptibility of the services, but instead encourage them to carry out honestly and fearlessly the problems of a democratic country.

In this respect, one can do no better than emulate the attitude of Ministers in Great Britain towards the permanent Services.

Every reader and particularly those who are concerned with the administration would profit by a study of the pictures of Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel candidly drawn by Shri Iengar, revealing a marked contrast in their approach to administration and attitude towards the Civil Service.

The author, out of his experience, gives a warning in the following words:

> "As a result of certain recent events, the impression has been created that the structure which we adopted from the British, namely, a Civil Service which is non-political and which can serve a Government of any complexion and is able to preserve continuity and tradition, has no longer any validity. Civil servants no longer feel that they will be protected by their Ministers against attacks in Parliament. The consequence of all this is a slowing down in the whole process of decision-making, a reluctance to make bold decisions and a tendency to 'pass the buck' around as far as possible."

Right from the Maurya period down to the present day, the integrity and usefulness of Civil Servants in India have fluctuated from dedicated efficiency to servile decay.

Shri Iengar is an optimist. His prognosis is:

> "What we are witnessing today is an interplay of social and political forces that leads to divided and somewhat confused leadership. I have the feeling that this stage will pass. We are today in low waters, but if we are to believe in our history, we will rise up and revive the great traditions of our past."

Having had an opportunity to view the problems from all angles, that of a Minister, a civil servant and a public man, I cannot but confess that the current phase is far from encouraging.

This book is of great value to all students of public life and administration.

K. M. MUNSHI

Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan,
Chowpatty Road, Bombay 7.
June 16, 1967.

CONTENTS

Page

FOREWORD BY DR. K. M. MUNSHI .. iii

1. ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA SINCE THE BRITISH LEFT 1

2. INDIAN GENIUS FOR ADMINISTRATION—A PEEP INTO PAST 18

3. AN ANALYSIS AND PROGNOSTICATION .. 34

1

ADMINISTRATION IN INDIA SINCE THE BRITISH LEFT

I consider it a great honour to have been asked by the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan to deliver the Endowment lectures on Indian history this year. May I say at once that I suffer, like most men of my generation at school, from one serious disqualification in delivering these lectures? The history that I was taught was the stereotyped history of battles and kings. There was not a word in it with a sociological content dealing, in particular, with the life of the people as it was affected day to day by the nature of the administration by the government of the day. However, on the subject of administration, it does happen that I have had very considerable experience in the last forty years, both during the British regime as well as under the independent Government of India, both in States as well as in the Central Government, and both in Government proper as well as in a semi-independent statutory institution, namely, the Reserve Bank. Moreover, during the last 4½ years I have been working in private business in assignments which bring me into close contact with administrative decision-making at high levels. Altogether, therefore, I suppose I should not really be apologetic about my qualifications for accepting the honour done to me to-day.

The subject I have taken up, namely, the role of administration from an historical point of view, is particularly important in the present stage of our development. There is a universal feeling that it is in this field that India, since 1947, has failed to achieve even a modicum of success and there is, at the moment, throughout the country, a tremendous feeling of frustration and bitterness. I notice that an M.P. went so far as to say the other day that administration has deteriorated to such a point that people are openly saying that they wished that British rule had continued. This is an extravagant generalisation, but it does dramatise the prevailing mood. Certainly, if one went to several of the old Indian States, one would hear quite a number of people sighing for the old days of the Maharajahs, bad as they were in most of the States. I think it is essential to probe into this matter with the utmost care. I propose in these three lectures to talk first about the actual situation at present in the field of administration; secondly, to answer the question whether a study of our history shows that this is due to any ingrained national weakness, or whether, in the past, we have demonstrated a high capacity for organising administration; and, thirdly, to analyse the causes for administrative decay, and both on the basis of an historical review and an assessment of current conditions, to project our mind into the future and to ask the question whether we could reasonably look forward to substantial improvements in the administrative field.

* * *

One of the striking features of our national life during the last nineteen years has been the widening gap between the enunciation of our political philosophy and objectives and what may be called administrative realities. In regard to the former, there is no doubt that we have always set our sights very high and no higher than is really necessary. I have recently been reading the speeches made at midnight on the 14th August 1947 by Dr. Rajendra Prasad, Pandit Nehru, and Dr. Radhakrishnan, an occasion when I had the privilege of a favoured seat as the Secretary of the Constituent Assembly of India. Pandit Nehru's speech was more than appropriate for the occasion; it was, in fact, one of his great speeches, full of emotion, of a sense of drama and of history, and with a vision of the future. Here are some extracts from what he said:

> "Freedom and power bring responsibility. That responsibility rests upon this Assembly, a sovereign body representing the sovereign people of India. Before the birth of freedom we have endured all the pains of labour and our hearts are heavy with the memory of this sorrow. Some of those pains continue even now. Nevertheless, the past is over and it is the future that beckons to us now.
>
> "That future is not one of ease or resting but of incessant striving so that we might fulfil the pledges we have so often taken and the one we shall take today. The service of India means the service of the millions who suffer. It means the ending of poverty and ignorance and disease and inequality of opportunity. The ambition of the greatest man of our generation has been to wipe every tear from every eye. That may be beyond us but as long as there are tears and suffering, so long our work will not be over.
>
> "And so we have to labour and to work and work hard to give reality to our dreams. Those dreams are for India, but they are also for the world, for all the nations and peoples are too closely knit together today for any one of them to imagine that it can live apart. Peace has been said to be indivisible; so is freedom, so is prosperity now, and so also is disaster in this One World that can no longer be split into isolated fragments.
>
> "To the people of India, whose representatives we are, we make appeal to join us with faith and confidence in this great adventure. This is no time for petty and destructive criticism, no time for ill-will or blaming others. We

have to build the noble mansion of free India where all her children may dwell."

Dr. Radhakrishnan made another great speech and here is part of what he said:

"Our opportunities are great but let me warn you that when power outstrips ability, we will fall on evil days. We should develop competence and ability which would help us to utilise the opportunities which are now open to us. From tomorrow morning—from midnight today—we cannot throw the blame on the Britisher. We have to assume the responsibility ourselves for what we do. A free India will be judged by the way in which it will serve the interests of the common man in the matter of food, clothing, shelter and the social activities. Unless we destroy corruption in high places, root out every trace of nepotism, love of power, profiteering and blackmarketing which have spoiled the good name of this great country in recent times, we will not be able to raise the standards of efficiency in administration as well as in the production and distribution of the necessary goods of life.

"Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru referred to the great contribution which this country will make to the promotion of world peace and the welfare of mankind. The Chakra, the Ashokan wheel, which is there in the flag embodies for us a great idea. Asoka, the greatest of our emperors—look at the words of H.G. Wells regarding him 'Highnesses, Magnificences, Excellencies, Serenities, Majesties'—among them all, he shines, alone a star—'Asoka the greatest of all monarchs'. He cut into rock his message for the healing of discords. If there are differences, the way in which you can solve them is by promoting concord. Concord is the only way by which we can get rid of differences. There is no other method which is open to us.

"Samavaya eva Sadhuh"

> "We are lucky in having for our leader one who is a world citizen, who is essentially a humanist, who possesses a buoyant optimism and robust good sense in spite of the perversity of things and the hostility of human affairs."

It is remarkable that Dr. Radhakrishnan, in spite of every excuse for being overwhelmed with emotion on that night, made such a penetrating and dispassionate analysis of some of our weaknesses—an analysis which is the basis of the remarkable exhortations which he is continuing to make almost day after day at present.

All this meant starting off at a high level of ideology. Subsequently, when the Constitution was framed, the preamble was also couched in the same idealistic vein.

The Indian National Congress which, except for a brief interlude in Kerala and Orissa, has formed Governments throughout the country ever since the beginning of independence, has also, in its Resolutions passed at the annual sessions and in its election manifestos, maintained the same high level of idealism. This should not be dismissed as mere propaganda meant to bamboozle the electorate at a time when votes are being canvassed. Speaking of the men at the top anyhow, I am quite prepared to accept the view that they meant exactly what they said and that they have persistently dreamed of an India becoming in every sense stronger every day—in other words, achieving greater prosperity and increasing social justice day by day.

But what are the realities of the situation today from the point of view of administration? I suggest that it is necessary to split the question into two parts; first, to consider administration from the point of view of what may be called the basic necessities of any civilized society, which means administration at points which are common to all countries; and, secondly, from the point of view of the newer and more deliberately contrived activities of the State such as planned economic development. The former would include problems such as law and order; the facilities for travel and communication; the mechanics for the assessment and payment of taxes; the relationship between the State or statutory local authority and the citizen in the matters such as the supply of water and sanitary facilities; the facilities for the hearing and disposal of his grievances, and the like. In other words, in the hundred and one respects in which the citizen is brought into contact with the State—when he lodges a complaint at the Police Station or petitions the Tahsildar over an alleged encroachment or asks for a mutation in the land revenue records or applies for the registration of a document or asks for a connection to the municipal water supply, what is his experience? Is he treated with consideration, in other words, does the administrative machinery operate in the manner in which it is expected to operate in any decent society, viz., with understanding and a desire to help, or is he subjected to indignities, harassment and delay by an arrogant, corrupt, inefficient bureaucracy? The other type of administrative organisation associated with planned economic development would raise questions such as the efficiency with which plans are formulated and the efficiency and integrity with which they are implemented, so far as implementation lies with Government agencies. In particular, are the control mechanisms associated with development operated with speed and integrity and generally in a manner that will subserve the basic objectives of the controls—or, here again, does administration tend to be arrogant, inefficient, and corrupt? Common to both fields of administrative responsibility is the quality of administration at the highest decision making level, both in the States as well as in the Union Government; in other words, the calibre of the State and

Central Governments. This, in turn, involves the relationship between Ministers and Civil Servants as well as the problem of answerability of Ministers to the Central Parliament and to the State Legislatures.

* * *

I regret to say that, in my judgment, in the field of what may be called the basic necessities of any civilised society, there has been a perceptible deterioration since British days. Let us, first of all deal with the problem of law and order.

Over the years the British established a system of police and magistracy and put on the statute book codes giving executive powers to these functionaries which ensured the protection of the citizen to the extent humanly possible in any society. The basis of the statutes as well as of the administrative orders issued under them was that the Police had specific, clearly defined authority to function when crimes were being committed. If a person, for instance, was being assaulted or if property was being looted or destroyed, the Police not only could act but were enjoined to act without having to seek the authority of their superiors and, in particular, of the Government. This was the foundation on which the whole of the police administration rested. Complications arose when religious controversies projected themselves on the streets as, for instance, in the case of religious processions before temples or mosques by Muslims or Hindus as the case may be. But the law itself was very clear and administrative practice over the years was codified on the basis of rights acquired by longstanding practice. More difficult complications arose when Mahatma Gandhi launched his unusual technique of satyagraha. These complications arose because the Mahatma enjoined on people to flout certain laws, but to flout them in a non-violent manner. He asked them, for instance, to break the Salt Law peacefully. It was easy enough to deal with the situation when the satyagraha or the violation of the law was carried out by an individual, but it was difficult when it was carried out on a mass scale. For this meant in practice that the Police had to ignore systematic violations of the law of the land. But apart from a possible loss of prestige to the Government, the situation was not really difficult so far as the citizen was concerned. The real difficulty arose when the public decided to defy bans on public assemblies or on processions in certain areas. So long as these processions were peaceful the Police could afford to ignore them, but the difficulty was that it could not always be guaranteed that an unlawful procession would be peaceful. By and large, however, during the British days the problem was settled by wise leadership which, on the whole, ensured that the defiance of the law was non-violent.

It is a regrettable feature of independent India that ill-discipline has increased and violence is rearing its head in uglier and uglier forms every day. The communal riots which used to disfigure the law and order situation as a more or less regular feature during the closing days of British rule have, fortunately, by and large, disappeared, but their place has been taken by orgies of violence involving the destruction of property and violence to life on a considerable scale. The particular issue that sparks off a spasm of violence is irrelevant. It may be the language question, or it may be the location of a steel plant, or it may be certain grievances of students, or it may be, as happened recently, an agitation for a ban on cow slaughter. Whatever be the provocation, the result has been serious destruction of public property and regrettable loss of life. Particularly in the field of transport the public is held to ransom by large scale hartals and bandhs and the whole country is put to considerable loss of production at a time when it is vitally necessary that production should be pushed up to the maximum possible extent.

If it was merely a question of increased violence I believe the Police would have been able to handle it with firmness. Under the law they have the authority to do so and by long-standing practice they are competent enough to deal with ugly situations. The real difficulty now has been the injection of political motivations into the handling of situations by the Police. It is generally believed, for instance, that the agitation for a steel plant, though not its violent manifestations, had the full backing of a State Government. When it erupted initially into a blocking of the railway tracks the Police took no action because it was believed they were asked not to take any action by the State Government. It was the initial reluctance to take any action when public transport was blocked that led to a contempt for law and for the taking over of the situation by hooligan elements. The subsequent destruction of property such as signal cabins and other railway property was so quick and so widespread that it was physically impossible for the Police to bring it under control without resorting to firing. There must be thousands of people roaming about today who took part in this orgy of violence and who will never be caught and punished for it.

The same sequence of events may be seen in connection with another situation, namely, the border dispute between Mysore and Maharashtra. Here again in both States demonstrations which looked peaceful enough at first were organised by political parties with the State Governments looking on with some degree of approval. The situation afterwards was seriously aggravated and considerable force had to be used.

I see in all this a vital change since the British days. The change consists largely in that the Police, instead of acting under the law, have come to depend on Government instructions; and these instructions, in turn, depend on predominantly political considerations. I do not imply that on occasions the Police did not, during the British regime, ask Government for instructions. They did, but as a rule, only on occasions such as defiance of bans on public assemblies and processions and symbolic defiances of laws such as the Salt Act. In the matter of protection of life and property they did not have to and in fact did not ask for instructions; they acted under the law. The only significant exception to this I know of is the great Calcutta killing. But that was an instance of malevolent interference by a Provincial Government in the functioning of the Police with a weak and impotent Governor looking on. In general, I fear that a consequence of political interference has been a worsening law and order situation in the country. An extreme instance of this was in the Punjab during the regime of Pratap Singh Kairon.

I am not making a plea for what is usually called a Police Raj which I understand to mean a rampage by the Police in violation of the limitations imposed on them by the law. All I am doing is to plead for a restoration of freedom to the Police to act under the law—a freedom which has often been restricted by State Governments for political reasons and which has led to some loss of initiative on the part of the Police with harmful results on the law and order situation.

It has been a favourite proposal of mine whenever I have talked to Ministers, particularly of State Governments, to suggest that it would be useful to have an enquiry by an impartial agency about the state of administration since the British left. This would necessarily be confined, not to the developmental activities which have been inaugurated for the first time since independence, but to what may be called administration at the grass roots level. There has been a curious reluctance to agree to any such investigation. I am afraid I have come to the conclusion that this reluctance might well be due to the fear that any such investigation would be damaging to the reputation of Governments since independence. There is confirmation for this view in an episode relating to the old Government of Bombay, an episode of which I was personally aware when I was Governor of the Reserve Bank of India.

The Government of Bombay agreed that an Academic Society—a body which, on all counts, was completely objective and non-political—should conduct an enquiry into the state of the revenue administration in a selected district. The district actually chosen was one which happened to have been the constituency of the Chief Minister of the State. I mention this because it may be supposed that in this district, if anywhere, officials would take special steps to carry out Government instructions both in letter and in spirit—and the instructions were quite unexceptionable. The investigator sent out by the Society had access to all official records and the opportunity to discuss them with the officials concerned such as the Deputy Collector, the mamlatdar, and the others. The state of affairs disclosed by the report was distressing. There had been steady and very substantial deterioration all round in revenue administration since independence. For example, it was always the practice in the Bombay Presidency, enforced by systematic inspection by Collectors and Commissioners, that the Assistant or Deputy Collector who was in charge of a subdivision had practically no arrears. It was standing practice for this official either to pass orders immediately on a matter before him and send them down to the Taluk office for implementation, or, if the matter was beyond his authority, to send it up to the Collector with his recommendations. The only occasions when matters were held up were those which involved personal inspection of sites. The Society's Inspector discovered that arrears in the Office of the Sub-divisional Officer were enormous and steadily mounting up. But apart from the question of delay, there was also the question of the psychology of the administration. Far from the administration being more human and understanding and more responsive to the needs of the impoverished classes, as may be supposed would be the case after freedom, the Report disclosed an attitude of officiousness and lack of sympathy, sometimes almost callousness, of behaviour. This Report was sent to the Government of Bombay but nothing ever came of it. I imagine that the defensive mechanism of the officials came into play and the report was shelved.

From time to time, whenever I go out, I ask people how they find the administration in so far as their daily needs are concerned, and the reply that I get, except in isolated patches, is that administration has deteriorated. I concede that subjective impressions of this sort may be misleading, but the fact that I get the same impression from a variety of places and from different types of people cannot be ignored. Pandit Nehru quoted Mahatma Gandhi's famous expression about the wiping of tears from human eyes. That implies an attitude of sympathy, of humility, of understanding. It appears to be the case that in the attitude of the lower bureaucracy, these are singularly absent in spite of independence and in spite of the ideologies enshrined in the Constitution.

I hope no one will consider these remarks to imply that in my judgment, during the British regime, delays did not take place or that the bureaucracy was always efficient and public-spirited. From my own experience that was not the case. At the top the attitude of the bureaucracy was that of the Ma-Bap—patriarchal and dispensing favours or punishment, though well meaning. At the lower levels, I fear, they were grasping and officious. Indeed the complaint one could have legitimately made was that the entire official class considered itself as the masters of the people conferring favours on them rather than as their servants out to help them. My whole point is that in spite of having a national Government responsible to legislatures elected on the basis of adult franchise, the situation which was never terribly good has actually became worse. This is one of the great contradictions in the Indian scene.

I plead for an enquiry into this matter conducted on a systematic basis by an objective body. There is no reason to be squeamish about the fact that comparison would necessarily be with the situation in British days. No question of prestige should come in the way of such an equiry; and in any case the British have a high reputation for administrative competence. The initial impact of such an enquiry may be damaging to Congress Governments, but I have little doubt that from the long-term point of view it would have a good effect and may even redound to the credit of the Congress Governments themselves for courage and good sense.

* * *

This is not the occasion to discuss what sort of agency should be entrusted with the enquiry referred to above. But whatever that be, it seems doubtful whether it can get any evidence other than purely subjective impressions as to the extent to which corruption has increased since independence. That is another vast, horrifying field which should make all of us wonder whether such material progress as we are making is not being eroded on the moral plane by an increasing collapse of standards of behaviour.

The Santhanam Committee went specially into the question of corruption. In their report dated the 31st March 1964 they stated as follows:

> "In the nature of things it is not possible to give even a rough estimate of the number of corrupt Government servants or the amount of money or value or percentage of illegal gratifica-

tion that may be involved. However, the statistics furnished below would help in giving a measure of prevalence of the malady. The statistical information furnished below should not be taken as indicating the increase in the quantum of corruption.

> "Increase in complaints, investigations, prosecutions, departmental proceedings and punishments may mean a more intensified fight against corruption than any increase in it. It should also be noted that all the complaints and vigilance cases do not relate to charges of bribery and corruption. Quite a number of them are in respect of other types of disciplinary offences.
>
> "It is clear that corruption is not confined to lower ranks of public servants and that the number of gazetted officers whose cases had to be investigated was disturbingly large."

It is possible that with the setting up in all States and at the Centre of Vigilance Commissioners, more information would be available. Of necessity, however, the matter is not susceptible of statistical evidence.

There is a tendency in our country—a tendency which is unfortunately on the increase—to attribute wrong motives and corrupt behaviour on the flimsiest evidence and often on no evidence whatsoever. The tendency to throw mud has indeed reached a level when it is possible for an M.P. to make allegations against a Cabinet Minister on the basis of fabricated documents. It also happens that when a Minister or a Secretary commits what reasonable persons may regard as an error of judgment, that is blown up into mis-conduct of a dishonourable type. Moreover, we seem to have a national tendency towards self-flagellation. While other countries prefer to hide certain vices under the rug we seem to prefer to air them and loudly to proclaim their existence. However, after making allowances for this tendency to exaggerate or even maliciously to invent, the fact has to be admitted that there is widespread belief in the country that corruption has increased to a point at which it is a scandal and a moral canker.

* * *

We may now turn to the problem of the developmental activities of Government initiated since independence. In the field of rural reconstruction generally and of agricultural development in particular, this involves an assessment of the community development projects and of Panchayati Raj. In the field of industrial development it concerns the priorities laid down in the plans and the mechanics adopted through controls in order to ensure that these priorities are observed and that progress is achieved in accordance with the plans.

It must be said to the credit of the Planning Commission and the Government of India that there have been a series of reports prepared under official auspices evaluating the community development projects. These, however, make sorry reading. One has to concede, of course, that this is a new type of activity to which the official class was not accustomed, and the fundamental change in outlook demanded by this novel form of activity could not be expected to take place overnight. Nevertheless, after some initial impact the projects have failed to a degree which can only be described as amounting to a serious failure of administration. A few years ago a mission from the United Nations evaluated the success of the community development project and drew attention to "the widespread confusion in India between what is intended and what in fact exists." "The rapid growth of the community development staff," they added, "has meant that they have moved increasingly further away from the original impetus and clarity of vision of the former small circle of community development workers." Only the other day, the newspapers reported the results of a survey by the Allahabad University about the knowledge of villagers regarding economic plans. Their conclusion in respect of a village which was not isolated from Allahabad or other urban areas, was that there "is a shocking degree of ignorance, indifference and psychological blackout in rural areas about economic plans." Even after making allowance for the time that would be required to retrain the psychology of a bureaucracy accustomed under the British regime only to the maintenance of law and the collection of taxes, this is a sorry indictment of development administration in free India.

The Panchayati Raj was started with great hopes. The philosophy underlying it was undoubtedly a good one, namely, that scope should be given for local initiative and local leadership for activities having an impact on local amenities and necessities. Unfortunately, instead of being started on an experimental basis in a few isolated areas, it has been carried out on an extensive scale over the greater part of the country and all the evidence shows that the high hopes entertained about its success have been belied. The reasons for this are not so much bureaucratic inefficiency as the injection of caste feelings and political interference.

It seems to be one of the laws of public life in India today that wherever is power and authority people scramble to get in and to stay in. This is perhaps no more than a statement of the limitations of human nature and a similar scramble happens in all other countries. But we do not appear to have evolved, in the Panchayat institutions to-day, the built-in structural safeguards which in politically advanced countries lead to acceptable standards of administration.

* * *

In the compass of a brief lecture it is not possible to do more than cover either a narrow segment of the administrative field or to glance perhaps superficially over the field generally. What I have done is the latter, and it leads to a depressing feeling. Why have the high hopes so eloquently expressed on the midnight of the 14th of August 1947 and so eagerly looked forward to by the people been dashed in practice? Could it be that, as a people, we have no particular genius for the practical, the humdrum tasks of administration? Or could it be that the particular leaders of the independence movement, after years of exhausting trial in political wilderness, failed, as a whole, to develop the touch for activities which are the antithesis of a revolution? Or could it, again, be that the administrative tasks of a free India in the second half of this century, with gusty winds blowing across caste and creed and religion and the looming tragedy of famine are too complex even for the gifted administrator? These are the questions I hope to answer in the next two lectures.

2

INDIAN GENIUS FOR ADMINISTRATION—A PEEP INTO PAST

A study of Indian history shows that there have been periods when political thinking and the administrative organisation of the State reached very high levels. These were sustained, sometimes for long periods, but conditions thereafter deteriorated giving place to confusion and virtual anarchy. These oscillations in the administrative efficiency of States occurred not merely in Northern India which was subjected to periodical invasions from the North-west, but also in South India which was relatively free from the confusion and turmoil necessarily following an invasion by foreign troops. For an understanding of the course of Indian history it is necessary to appreciate both these points, viz., that there were periods of sustained administration at a high level of efficiency and periods when this level collapsed. Shri Nilakanta Sastri, Emeritus Professor of Indian History and Archaeology in the University of Madras and Professor of Indology, University of Mysore, has the following rueful commentary to make:

> "The historian of India must perhaps remain a stranger to the bracing effects of a consciousness that his is a study of continuous and progressive tendencies steadily working for the amelioration of his fellow-men. He cannot claim that in any sphere of human activity, whether it be in the production and conservation of wealth, in the creation and development of political organisation, or in devotion to the fine arts, or even in the pursuit of religious life and the practice of moral virtues, often held up as the differentia of Indian culture, there has been a steady advance through centuries towards a higher level

> of achievement. No country in the world, not even the most fortunate, has altogether escaped disorders and revolutions that have often rudely undone, for a time, the noble results of generations of civilised life and work. But the student of India's past finds it hard to resist the impression that at some stage in her history there set in a rot which, spreading soon over all spheres of life, sapped its vitality and made for the continuous loss of her efficiency. Foreign domination, the ascendency of caste, the pessimistic outlook on life started by Buddhism and perfected by the Vedanta, and other causes of an equally sweeping character have been brought forward as the possible causes of decay. Even the earlier phase of the history of India, in which she was most herself, little dominated by the foreigner though by no means unwilling to absorb the good that he brought into her ken, and giving freely of the best in her to the rest of Asia without the least attempt at an enforced cultural, much less physical, domination of the lands enriched by her gifts,—even this phase has often been viewed in the shadow of ideas generated by the decadent phase of her subsequent history."

The heyday of enlightened thinking and remarkably successful administration in North India was in the pre-Maurya period and the Maurya period stretching from 700 B.C. for well over five hundred years. During this long period, there was in North India a level of administration which was remarkable both for the political thinking that went behind it as well as its sustained brilliance in actual implementation. In South India I would pick out, not as an exceptional example but as a representative sample, a period under the Cholas which was likewise remarkable for the clarity of political thinking as well as for the virtuosity with which this thinking was given shape and life every day through administrative organisation. But here again a period of highly successful administration gave place to a period of relative chaos. Coming to more recent times, there was an efflorescence of thinking at the time of Akbar, but this again was followed by a period of utter chaos leading to the establishment of British authority in the country. In other words, Indian history has demonstrated that our people have been capable of high levels of efficiency and that if there is failure to-day that is not because of any inherent lack of genius for the practicalities of administration.

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The authorities on which one relies for information as to the state of administration in the pre-Mauryan period consist of the Dharma-Sutras and the Artha-Shastra of Kautilya. It is fashionable to decry the latter as a piece of Machiavellian thinking. In fact, the Artha-Shastra can be properly described as an exceptionally able dissertation both on the aims of a State as well as on the practical means by which these aims can be achieved. As to the so-called Machiavellian nature of some of the propositions contained in the Artha-Shastra one can only say that Kautilya was honest and stated frankly what today is hidden under a dubious veil of secrecy. This applies, for instance, to the organisation of espionage both internal as well as external. Every State to-day indulges in espionage, but the nomenclature is Intelligence. The objectives are identical with those stated by Kautilya, viz., to protect the State from disruptive elements within as well as from enemies without. But a certain amount of hypocrisy is now regarded as appropriate. For instance, President Eisenhower was accused of naivete when he owned up responsibility for the U2 flights over the Soviet Union. Kautilya would undoubtedly have approved of the U2 flights but probably taken a poor view of President Eisenhower's naivete.

For understanding the nature of administration during the pre-Mauryan and Mauryan period it is necessary to be clear as to what were the aims and objectives of the State. The basic aims were as follows: (1) the maintenance of public security and welfare; (2) the security of the State as an international entity; and (3) the organisation of certain limited economic activities. It must also be remembered that the maintenance of the caste system was assumed, without argument, as an essential element of the social order. I make this point because, as I will show subsequently, it is the constitutional provision for the non-recognition of caste barriers that has introduced a new and vital element into our administrative and political system.

The State was generally a monarchy and, in theory, was totalitarian, but the concept of the functions of the State and the manner in which administration was organised diluted to a considerable extent the absolute powers of the monarch. As a prince he was subjected to special tutelage which emphasized not merely his powers as a King but also his responsibilities as Head of the State. I have been reading recently of the decision taken by the Royal family in England to send the Prince of Wales to Trinity College, Cambridge. Even though the Prince will eventually be the King, he will only be a Constitutional Head of State with no real authority to settle policy or administration. Nevertheless considerable attention has been given, in consultation both with ecclesiastical dignitaries and others, to decide on the nature of the courses the Prince has to take. The need for the right type of education was all the greater in olden days when there were no constitutional limitations to the powers of a monarch. The monarch, when he began his reign, had behind him sound spiritual and cultural education and martial training; and throughout his reign he had Ministers to advise him and a bureaucracy with well-defined powers to carry out the functions of the State. The structure of this bureaucracy and the functions assigned to them sound astonishingly modern although they relate to a period of well over 2,500 years in our history.

There was first of all a distinction between the civil and military wings. It is interesting that even so long ago as 700 B.C. it was considered appropriate that the distinction between the functions of the army and the civilian wing of the Government should be maintained with some degree of precision. On the civilian side, the structure of the bureaucracy was naturally based on the recognised needs and functions of the State, namely, the collection of taxes to support both the royal household and the cost of the bureaucracy, the maintenance of public law and order, the dispensation of justice and, lastly, the carrying out of certain economic functions. As a necessary part of the machinery for carrying out the functions of the State, there was a department in charge of the State records and accounts as well as a system of audit.

It is interesting to observe that although the preservation of the caste system was assumed as basic to the entire organisation, and the Brahmin caste enjoyed certain privileges, the army was not confined only to the Kshatriyas. People of all castes were enrolled in the army.

The most significant sources of revenue were a tax on land, a tax on artisans and a tax on traders, including customs duties. The tax on land was assessed directly on individual agricultural holdings. The concept which is to-day common currency in the thinking of Government, viz., that the person actually cultivating the field should both have responsibility for paying the tax as well as the incentive to reap the benefits of the effort he puts into tilling it, is thus not a new concept but is as old as the Artha-

Shastra. The nature of the administrative arrangements for the collection of taxes from traders suggests that human nature 2,500 years ago was not noticeably different from what it is today. It was believed that traders would make attempts to evade payment of the taxes, and elaborate precautions were accordingly taken to prevent such evasion. There was provision, which again sounds very modern, for the setting up of bonded warehouses for payment of customs duties.

There were State agricultural farms run by experts to practise the latest available methods of scientific agriculture. This sounds very much like the model State farms that are run by various State Governments to-day. There is evidence that there was careful soil analysis, that seeds were chemically treated before sowing and that the timing of sowing was based both on astronomical and meteorological data. There was an extensive dairy department in charge of large herds and studs of domestic animals. It was the duty of the head of the department to arrange for their maintenance in carefully selected areas to see to their grazing and the provision of rations and to supervise the utilisation of the milk and other products including the remains of the dead cattle. There was a separate department for horses and other beasts of burden.

The State exploited forests, mines, and mineral deposits. There was a well recognised system for the reafforestation of exploited forest areas and it does look as if there was a very competent corps of experts who realised the importance, from the point of view of soil fertility, of preservation of forests to cushion the force of torrents pouring from the mountains. There was a special officer whose duty it was to collect various products, other than timber, of economic value and to set up workshops for the manufacture of goods required by the army as well as the civil population.

There were State factories also for the manufacture of textiles and it is interesting to observe that the skilled labour included both men and women. The wages of spinners depended both on the quality and quantity of the yarn spun by them. It looks as if the system of production bonuses and other schemes of labour incentives is not quite so novel as those who write on the subject like to believe; it certainly was prevalent in the pre-Mauryan period. Indeed, from the point of view of increasing productivity, it would be quite satisfactory if India became at least as sophisticated as she was over 2,000 years ago.

There is no historical evidence to suggest that the assumption by the State of responsibility for the running of certain industries such as mining, the exploitation of forest produce and the operation of textile mills was the result of any consciously worked out theory about a socialist state. In the absence of any evidence, one can only speculate on the subject. Considering that there was a class of traders who were well travelled and highly skilled—certainly skilled enough to have a constant battle of wits with the tax collecting authorities—one may assume that they could have undertaken the manufacturing activities themselves.

The most elaborate arrangements were made for the maintenance of internal as well as external security. It was recognised that the citizens, whose life and property it was the duty of the State to protect, could be harassed not only by criminals such as thieves and robbers, but also by anti-social elements such as corrupt officials and traders prepared to indulge in every variety of cheating for the purpose of lining their own pockets. The object of setting up an elaborate system of police was thus to suppress criminals as well as to purge the State, as far as it was possible to do, of other anti-social elements. This matter was regarded as so important that the entire

Fourth Book of the Artha-Shastra is devoted to the subject.

There was a separate police organisation for the villages as well as for the towns; and, in addition to the regular Police, there was also a Secret Police. In order to assist the Police in their task there was a system of passports for regulating entry and exit from the kingdom. Special importance was attached to ensuring the protection of the property of traders travelling through the kingdom and indeed it was enjoined that if theft or robbery took place the officials concerned had the responsibility of compensating the traders for their loss.

Elaborate references are made to the organisation of the Secret Police. Mr. R. P. Kangle in his study of the Artha-Shastra, summarises this organisation as follows:

Two types of secret service are distinguished. One is *Samstha* 'the establishment', the members of which are generally stationed in a single headquarters. The other is *Sanchara* 'the rover', the members of which move from place to place according as their services may be required.

There are five kinds of *samsthas:* (1) the *kapatika,* described as a *chhatra,* a pupil or an apprentice or an assistant, who observes and reports to the king or the minister in charge if there be anything harmful or evil; (2) the *udasthita,* an apostate monk, who is made the centre of a network of intelligence agents disguised as monks; (3) the *grhapatika-vyanjana,* a farmer rehabilitated by the State, who has a network of intelligence agents working under his direction; (4) the *vaidehaka-vyanjana,* a merchant similarly rehabilitated, with a number of intelligence agents under him; and (5) the *tapasa-vyanjana,* a bogus ascetic, imposing on the gullible as a great seer and thus becoming the centre of intelligence work.

There are four types of *samcaras:* (1) the *saltrin*, the secret agent par excellence, who is apparently an orphan specially trained by the State for this work; (2) the *tiksna*, the desperado or bravo, who is useful for secretly liquidating enemies of the State; (3) the *rasada,* the giver of poison; these two administer what is called *upamsudanda* 'secret punishment'; and (4) the *bhiksuki* or *parivrajika,* a Brahmin nun who does the work of spying in the houses of high officers where she finds easy access because of the honour shown to her in the palace. Heretical nuns can also be similarly employed.

All this should not be dismissed as an old world piece of Machiavellianism. Without drawing on my own knowledge of how Intelligence used to operate when I was Home Secretary at Delhi and drawing solely on published information it is clear that Intelligence activities today cover every conceivable device. But we do not seem to be uniformly successful. We recently had the strange phenomenon of the Administration in Delhi confessing publicly that they had no information that the crowds before Parliament House on the 7th of November 1966 included elements bent on violence and destruction. That is a pretty sad commentary on our Intelligence network. Kautilya would have said that it disclosed failure in the very elemental duties of sound administration.

There is elaborate regulation for the dispensation of justice at a high level. Certain cases are to be tried in the villages themselves by village panchayats and certain cases are to be tried by State judges as well as the King's Court itself which is the head of the State judiciary. There is reference in the Artha-Shastra for the determination of questions of fact by jury. One gets the impression that justice was on the whole fair and swift. A comparison with present day conditions would not redound to our credit. Enormously long drawn out proceedings, interminable technicalities, shocking delays—these would have been regarded in the days of the Artha-Shastra as failures in administration.

The whole apparatus of the State has an astonishingly modern look about it. One can only admire the logic with which different organisations of the State were instituted and the down-to-earth wisdom involved in the detailed organisation.

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We may now leap over a few centuries and across considerable terrain and go to South India under the Chola empire. The most significant feature of administration under the Cholas was the considerable degree of autonomy exercised by village assemblies and the restriction of the Central Government to the maintenance of internal security, the administration of justice as well as the preservation of the current social order. There was a well-organised and very efficient bureaucracy. Professor Sastri has pointed out that "the growing host of officials by no means interfere with the free life and the initiative of local authorities and systems while at the same time they control their efficiency and keep them on the straight path by a periodical scrutiny of their affairs. The more one reads the contemporary records, the more one begins to admire the nice balance struck between centralised control and local initiative, the clear distinction ever present between the functions of the State and those of the social group."

Although the authority exercised by the village assemblies was considerable, they were subjected to a general supervision by the King's Government and there was a periodical audit of their financial transactions. On occasions when certain important types of business were being transacted, the officials of the Central Government attended the meetings of the village assemblies. Village autonomy was thus an effective reality tempered by the advice and supervision of the King's Government only in matters of importance. A great deal of thinking was devoted to the subject of the internal autonomy of certain social groups in the villages. In certain matters these groups were independent but the village assemblies had a concurrent jurisdiction so that any decisions taken by the groups did not override the decisions taken by the assemblies in the general interests of the village as a whole.

There was an accurate survey of land and a careful record was kept in Government books about private rights on land. For the purpose of assessment of the land tax the holdings of land were subjected to systematic soil classification. In fact, there were twelve different grades of land depending on fertility. The assessment of land was also periodically revised. It is important to notice that, as in the days of the pre-Mauryan and Mauryan kingdoms in North India, so during a subsequent period in South India, importance was attached to the holder of the land and to providing him with incentives by limitations on the taxes that could be gathered by the State.

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The question that naturally arises for consideration is how the elaborate apparatus of administration actually worked in practice. Quite clearly, it is one thing to set up an organisation and give it the most unexceptionable directives, and it is an entirely different thing as to how these directives are, in fact, implemented. We know to-day what a wide gap there is between the directives of Government and the way they are actually carried out in day-to-day administration. Is there any evidence to show that either in the time of the Cholas or in the time of the pre-Mauryan and Mauryan period the same or a similar gap did not exist?

The evidence on this is fragmentary. One possible source consists of the stories written during the relevant periods. During the pre-Mauryan period there were the Jataka stories. These rather suggest that there were, on occassions, failures in administration. It must be noted in this context that stories cannot always be credited with a hundred per cent. accuracy about social conditions. In fact, as we know from contemporary experience, they could often stray far from the truth and be a compound of a great deal of imagination and exaggeration. If, for example, one read some of the novels that have recently been published in some Western countries, one would get the impression that the whole of Western society is shot through with sexual degeneracy which, of course, is a distortion of facts. Therefore the stories have to be treated with considerable reserve. On the whole, the evidence of historians is that the gap between administration as conceived by the Central Government of the day and as it was in actual practice was small. In his book on "A History of Indian Public Life", Volume II, Professor U. N. Ghoshal has this to say:

> "The greatest gift of the Mauryas was that they demonstrated the capacity of the most talented of the race-groups forming the composite population of Ancient India, to rule one of the largest Empires of the ancient world for over a century and a quarter. The pre-Maurya period, as we have endeavoured to show in Part I of this work, was marked by the creation of a highly organised civil and military administration at its topmost levels, and the Mauryas, to judge from their scanty surviving records (such as the references to the municipal administration and the military organisation of Chandragupta's reign and the hierarchy of officials operating under Asoka's rule) worthily upheld and developed this inheritance."

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The concept of establishing a direct relationship between Government and the person actually occupying and cultivating the land was a traditional one in India, but it had from time to time fallen into disuse. Akbar tried to re-establish this concept with the assistance of Todar Mull. Unfortunately, after some time again it fell into disuse. During the closing days of the Mughal Empire, when the provincial Governors paid no more than lip service to the throne at Delhi and were, in actual fact, independent satraps, the extent of deterioration and the nature of the variations from the normal which Akbar tried to establish varied from area to area.

As an example, we might look at the position as it was in the Deccan area under the Peshwas when the British began to establish their authority in that region. The settlement of land revenue under the Peshwas had become an annual affair. First of all, the Mamlatdar or the revenue head of the taluk established the total amount that had to be paid by a village. Thereafter the Patel or head of the village distributed this total sum amongst the different occupants. It is easy enough to see that this system, giving tremendous power to the head of the village, lent itself to possibilities of considerable abuse and harassment. Moreover, in addition to the annual tax that the occupant had to pay, he was burdened with a whole series of other cesses. According to the Survey and Settlement Manual of the old Bombay State the number of these extra cesses in the Poona district was 24 and in Ahmednagar it was 26. The Manual says "most of these are more or less understandable, e.g., *toop patti*, a levy of *ghi*, formerly paid in kind but since commuted for cash; *ambari toga patti*, on account of the privilege of using an elephant howdah, similarly commuted; *Dasara bakra patti*, for a goat at the Dasara; *lohokur patti*, on account of wood for stuffing saddles; and so on. It is less possible, however, to understand the reasonableness of levying *ad oeterunum* such a tax as *Hubshi patti*, originally imposed to defray the expense of repelling the Abyssinians from the Konkan or, most extraordinary of all, *kate moranaval patti*, a fine levied from each house by a Mamlatdar whose feet had been hurt by thorns in surveying the village lands. The heaviest of all these *pattis*, however was the *saudir varied patti*, levied originally to form a fund for bribing the Ministers at court, but afterwards as usual treated as part of the ordinary revenue and audited as such by the official accountants. It is naturally impossible to give any fixed rates for these taxes, varying as they did indefinitely." It is interesting, in this context, to note that even as late as 1936-37 when Sind was separated from the Province of Bombay, the revenue officials of Sind systematically collected, in addition to the land revenue and water tax, two different levies, the *rasai* and the *lapo*. For neither of them was there legal sanction but regular books of account were maintained in the Taluka offices. One of the levies was utilised to defray the camp expenses of senior touring officers, including the Commissioner, and the other part was distributed among the officials on a regular pre-determined basis.

The person who represented British authority in Poona after the downfall of the Peshwa empire was Mountstuart Elphinstone, a very remarkable person by any standard. He, like his confrere Monro in Madras, decided to rationalise the system of land taxes within his jurisdiction on the basis that the taxes should be moderate, should be fixed for a definite period of time, and should be complete in the sense that no other taxes should be paid in respect of the holding of the land. There is an interesting account in the Survey and Settlement Manual about the steps that were taken in order to achieve this result, the difficulties that were faced, the failures and, ultimately, the success achieved. The point to note is that the success that was achieved merely meant re-establishing the state of affairs that had existed from time to time in the whole history of India. The history of land revenue settlement thus presented the same cyclical pattern as the main course of history, namely, that there was a period of first-class administration alternated by a period of degeneracy and misrule.

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A question which the student of history would undoubtedly ask himself is why these oscillations occur; why, after a period of steady, good administration, there occurs a period of decay. Indeed, this would be of interest not merely to the academic historian but also to those who are interested in contemporary political and administrative problems in India. Amongst the latter the pessimists might want to concentrate on the reasons for decay whereas the optimists would undoubtedly want to take comfort from the fact that there have, in fact, been periods of first-class administration, and if such periods could occur in the past they could occur again in the future.

If I may put the matter in very simple terms, I should say that the answer would be that there was a change in the calibre of leadership. We have to remember that we are dealing with systems of government which were primarily monarchical. Although there were built-in safeguards intended to ensure that the monarchs functioned with a sense of responsibility for the public welfare—safeguards such as careful education, the inculcation of religious precepts, and the like—it is not to be supposed that generation after generation would maintain itself at a high level. The hereditary succession to great wealth and the power to exercise autocratic authority were bound to produce degeneracy. During periods when the King set high ideals before himself, the administration was good, but when the leadership failed in the sense that the King was oblivious of his duties to the citizen, was profligate, was extravagant, then the administration collapsed. I believe it is a good thing that monarchy has disappeared from the Indian scene though the system produced exceptionally able monarchs from time to time such as Krishnaraja Wodeyar of Mysore and Sayaji Rao of Baroda. The question is what type of leadership will emerge from the political set-up of to-day, based on adult franchise. Occasionally, this set-up may also produce outstanding leaders who will make themselves felt through the whole hierarchy of administration. But will it produce a leadership which, while not spectacular, is capable of ensuring certain minimum standards of administration as a *recurrent*, permanently dependable feature?

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AN ANALYSIS AND PROGNOSTICATION

In my first lecture I pointed out that on such evidence as is available one has to come to the regrettable conclusion that there has been a steady deterioration in normal administration since the British regime, but I pleaded for an enquiry conducted objectively and in depth, so that the facts could be ascertained. In my second lecture I pointed out that we had, as a people shown in the past great virtuosity in the field of administration but that periods of sustained brilliance had been followed by periods of administrative incompetence leading to chaos. In this third lecture I propose to discuss some of the important factors that have a bearing on the deterioration in administrative standards and to take a view about possibilities for the future.

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It is impossible to discuss either the current situation or to take a view about the future without a consideration of the effect on our whole administrative system of Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Patel who became the Prime Minister and Deputy Prime Minister in August 1947 and were the two dominant personalities striding across the Indian scene.

Pandit Nehru started off with certain fixed convictions which he would not allow anyone to discuss with him. They were, to him, articles of faith so fundamental that any discussion was a tiresome waste of time. It is a measure of the man's greatness that some of these convictions were profoundly correct and helped to lay a proper foundation for the successful functioning of democracy in India. On the other hand, it is a measure of his weakness that some of his convictions were inadequately founded either on logic or experience and led to considerable wastage of administrative effort.

For instance, on the so-called communal problem in India, Pandit Nehru had convictions so deep and going so profoundly to the very fundamentals of our existence that it was impossible even to contemplate arguing with him about them. He believed, with the core and heart of his being, in secular democracy and in equality of all castes and creeds under the Constitution. Coming to the particular problem of the Muslims, which had led to the partition of the country, he believed profoundly that it was impossible for India to survive unless the Muslim community was made to feel that it could hold its head high like the Hindu community and had equal opportunities and privileges. During the holocaust of the Punjab in 1947 I remember travelling with him on one occasion in Gurdaspur District. He was doing a joint tour of inspection of the East and West Punjab with Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan, the Prime Minister of Pakistan. At one point in the tour he was told by some Muslim villagers that they were afraid of being attacked that night by Hindus and Sikhs from a village about five miles away. Pandit Nehru immediately ordered his car to dash to that village, all security arrangements went quite haywire, and he was also parted from Mr. Liaquat Ali Khan who was waiting for him in another car. I managed to get in with Pandit Nehru. After reaching the neighbouring village he stood up in his car, summoned the villagers, and made an impassioned speech. He was very angry. He ended up by saying that if they attacked the Muslims he would not hesitate to ask the Army to destroy the village. It is arguable whether this was, for the Prime Minister of the country, the best way of dealing with the matter, but his emotions were aroused and he did not wait to think out what concrete administrative steps should be taken to deal with a possible emergency. A less emotional person would probably have sent for the Army Commander who was in his entourage and asked him to ensure protection to the Muslims. But the incident illustrated Pandit Nehru's deep conviction that the Muslims as a minority community must get the fullest backing and support of the State against anyone wanting to attack them. This incident took place at a time when he knew that Hindus and Sikhs were being mercilessly butchered in West Punjab, but that made no difference to him. He did not believe in tit for tat. He knew that irrespective of what happened in West Punjab the foundations of India would totter if full protection was not given to the Muslim community. Subsequently he deliberately went out of his way, in the making of appointments, to show that he trusted members of the Muslim community. On occasions his judgment was proved wrong but, taking everything into account, he did succeed in getting the country to accept his philosophy with regard to the Muslim community, though not universally, unfortunately, because there were strident elements particularly in the U.P. which were revivalist and somewhat anti-Muslim in their approach. He had the utmost contempt for this group. The judgment of history of the early years after partition will undoubtedly be that Pandit Nehru's greatest service to India was his strenuous attempt to get the country to accept the concept of a secular State.

In the matter of non-alignment as well, his convictions were equally profound and there was no question of anybody arguing the matter with him. In the long nights when people were asleep and he was working all by himself either in York Road or in the Commander-in-Chief's house he had worked out what he thought was the right foreign policy for India and he reached this conclusion without discussion with any one. Indeed on all major issues of foreign policy he just laid down the law. I remember a Secretary-General once telling me that he was just a scribe waiting for the oracle to speak. Looking back over the years it is clear that although in some matters of foreign policy Pandit Nehru's judgment proved correct and secured the basic interests of India, in some his judgment proved faulty such as, for instance, in the matter of his assessment of Chinese intentions.

There is reason to think that this might not have happened if he had shown more inclination to consult his experts in the Foreign Office.

But while on the internal policy regarding Muslims and on the non-alignment policy in the field of external relations his policy was basically correct, there were other matters in which he acted on the basis of personal beliefs and hunches without discussion with others and in some of them he was profoundly wrong. He was inclined to be carried away by certain slogans based either on experience in other countries or on theorising by people in other countries. For instance, it was an article of faith with him that co-operative farming should be adopted by India. This sounded right and attractive, but he did not bother to enquire from people about the harsh realities of village life and the practical issues involved in giving a push to co-operative farming. Neither did people have the courage to go and tell him that he was wrong. The result was that the concept of co-opeartive farming was accepted as a matter of policy, but everybody knew that in Indian conditions this was doomed to failure.

Likewise Pandit Nehru had a profound belief in the virtues of Panchayati Raj. This again sounded very attractive. He had read of the success of Village Panchayats in the past and he dreamt of the system being revived and of tens of thousands of Village Panchayats all over India acting as strong forces for the regeneration of village life. While it was undoubtedly right that he should have given a trial to Panchayati Raj, it is a moot question whether, if he had discussed the practical implications of the project, he would not have experimented somewhat more modestly than he actually did. Nor did people have the courage to go and tell him that matters were not so simple as he evidently believed.

I had the very great privilege of working with Pandit Nehru as his Principal Secretary, and the period during which I worked with him, short as it was, will remain one of the happiest in my memory. It was a fascinating experience working with him and I felt that I was partaking in a great adventure. He was very easy to get on with, profoundly human when I committed mistakes, and most genuinely friendly and understanding and helpful. He had absolutely no use for thinking about the past and I do not believe that it ever occurred to him to think that I had previously been a member of the so-called steel frame of the British Government against which he was fighting so relentlessly. But I think it would be correct to say that, while he was most kindly and considerate to many of us in the Service as individuals, he did not think of us, as a class, as being particularly distinguished. We were there to do a job of work. Some of us were good and some mediocre, but we were not people with whom it was appropriate for him to discuss the pros and cons of the kind of problem that was thrown up to the Prime Minister of India. In other words, while there was some magic about working with him—at the personal level he was charming and affectionate—one did not get the impression that one had any share in the making of decisions.

It was here that his approach to the Civil Service was fundamentally different from that of Sardar Patel.

I had the privilege, again, of working with Sardar Patel as his Home Secretary for some 2½ years.

That again was a fascinating experience. At the personal level he also was a man who, although he had a stern and almost forbidding countenance, was full of understanding and was capable of a profound degree of affection. But he wanted to make the fullest use of the knowledge and experience which the Civil Service had acquired. To him they were people with whom it was worth while discussing a problem before he took a decision. Several of the problems that came up in the Home Ministry involved a knowledge of the thinking of political parties and of the character and motivations of leading individuals in different parties. On these subjects, over the years, Sardar Patel had acquired very considerable knowledge and experience himself. Nevertheless it was always a matter of interest to notice that he wanted to know what the Civil Service thought. I remember on one occasion the question of one of the leaders arose and I told him that it sounded a little comic to me that he should consult me about that particular gentleman. I said I thought that the Sardar knew a great deal more about him than the official machinery. He turned to me and gravely said that I was making a mistake. "I may have moved about with him a great deal," he told me, "but how do I know that my impression of the man is not a prejudiced one? It is of the greatest use to me to know what you or the official machinery think. Your appreciation of the person may be based on facts of which I have no knowledge Between my own knowledge and what you are able to tell me, I may be able to get a balanced picture." Here was modesty and profound commonsense. Insofar as the Civil Service was concerned the point of all this was that he made the Civil Servants feel that they had a responsibility—and a big responsibility—and were partners with him in the task of administration and not mere scribes carrying out instructions.

I remember on one occasion taking to him a letter from one of the political leaders threatening a fast unto death and dire consequences if some of his conditions were not immediately accepted. I took the letter with me in my pocket and went to see the Sardar and told him about it. He then began slowly to discuss the letter. I asked him whether he did not want to read it himself. He turned to me and asked whether I had not told him all that it contained and whether there was any point which I had forgotten to mention. I said, no, I had given him a gist of all the important points in it. He then refused to look at the letter and we had a discussion as to what steps we should take.

I mention this instance to illustrate an aspect of his handling of the Civil Servants which has a profound significance to-day. He selected people, trusted them, and gave them their head, subject to overriding policy being settled by him. This put the Civil Servants on their honour to work for him to the limit of their capacity and never, as far as humanly possible, to let him down. On one occasion, I took a decision in his absence and reported it to him afterwards. He told me that if he had been consulted he would not have taken that decision. I was very unhappy about this, but he asked me not to worry and said that every human being makes mistakes. When the matter subsequently came before the Cabinet he told them that the decision was his, and there the matter ended. The incident made a striking impression on me.

The Sardar lived only for a short period after independence and the profound influence that he had on the functioning of the Civil Service did not last for very long after his death. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, with all his great qualities, did not have any particular feeling for administration or the genius required for getting the maximum work out of the large heterogeneous mass of Government servants all over the country. He was a great romantic figure who projected India on the international stage and whom people came in their millions to see and worship, but not for him the drab consideration of the realities of the administrative jungle.

I have been speaking at some length about the difference in the handling of the Civil Servants by Pandit Nehru and Sardar Patel because this has become an issue of real importance in a consideration of the administrative weakness in India to-day. As a result of certain recent events the impression has been created that the structure which we adopted from the British, namely, a Civil Service which is non-political and which can serve a Government of any complexion and is able to preserve continuity and tradition, has no longer any validity. Civil servants no longer feel that they will be protected by their Ministers against attacks in Parliament. The consequence of all this is a slowing down in the whole process of decision-making, a reluctance to take bold decisions and a tendency to "pass the buck" around as far as possible.

I believe this development in the relationship between Political Ministers and the Civil Servants is profoundly to be deplored. I am assuming that we are not planning for a one-party system of government in our country. I remember that when I appeared before the Administrative Reforms Commission and was asked how I thought the working of a Secretariat should be improved, I asked whether I should assume that the Congress will always be in power or whether we should plan on the basis of an alternative constitutional party or group of parties forming a Government. If the latter is the case, as all true lovers of the country should wish, then the impartiality of the Civil Service and the studied maintenance of that impartiality are matters of the utmost importance. This means that we should strive to preserve in India the relationship that exists in the U.K. between the permanent Civil Service and the Political Ministers. The nature of the relationship has been described very aptly by Lord Attlee, probably one of the great Prime Ministers of the U.K., in an article in the "Political Quarterly":

> "When I succeeded Mr. Churchill as Prime Minister and returned to the conference at Potsdam, I took with me precisely the same team of civil servants, including even the principal private secretary, as had served my predecessor. This occasioned a lively surprise among our American friends who were accustomed to the American system whereby the leading official advisers of the President and of the members of his Cabinet are usually politically of his and their own colour. The incident brought out forcibly the very special position of the British Civil Service, a position which has developed during the past hundred years as the result of the Trevelyan-Northcote reforms.
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> "I do not think that this remarkable attribute of impartiality in the British Civil Service is sufficiently widely known nor adequately recognized for what it is—one of the strongest bulwarks of democracy. I am often at pains to point this out and did so at a recent conference of Asiatic socialists in Rangoon where I told them, to their surprise, that the same men who had worked out the details of Labour's Transport Act were now, at the behest of a Conservative Government, engaged in pulling it to pieces.
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> "I recall, in this regard, a time when I was working with the late Lord Addison, Minister of Agriculture in the second Labour Government, when he was framing the Agricultural Marketing Bill. Sir Arthur Street, an outstanding civil servant, offered a most strenuous opposition to it, but three weeks later one could have got an affiliation order against him as its only begetter."

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One of the profound changes that has taken place since independence is the enunciation of the doctrine of equality under the Constitution for all religions, castes and creeds. Indeed the Constitution has gone further than merely enunciating equality. In order to ensure that members of the backward classes shall have adequate representation in the Services, special steps have been taken to give them additional leverage over members of the more advanced communities. I have no doubt in my mind that this was constitutionally the right step to take, but one must reckon with the practical consequences of forcing the pace of equality. I am one of those who believe that there is no inherent difference intellectually between one community and another. There is not the slightest reason to suppose that a member of one of the Scheduled Castes, for instance, or of the Hill Tribes, is in any sense inferior to a Brahmin or an advanced Hindu; and given the right training and opportunity he would do just as well as a member of the latter community. But the pace of change can be forced a little too rapidly and what we are witnessing to-day in the public services is the effect of the forcing of this pace. I think there has been, for the time being, a weakening of administration because people who have not had the necessary training or acquired the necessary tradition have been put into positions of responsibility for which they are not yet completely fitted. This is no doubt a passing phase, but what we are dealing with now is a study of administration during this passing phase. We have, frankly, to recognise the fact that for the time being we have got to pay a price for hastening a little rapidly in the matter of taking into the Services a number of people with an inadequate degree of knowledge and training.

I believe we are beginning to witness the erosion of the caste spirit in India but only just beginning to do so. The spirit is still very strong and exercises a dominant influence on several aspects of the administration. Once this phase passes, we may expect more objective standards in administration.

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In any evaluation of the standard of administration in India, one must take into account the effect of Government controls and regulations both on the efficiency of the administration and on its standards of integrity.

In the last fifteen years, in an effort to ensure that the plans are successful, Government have instituted a whole battery of controls. To take one example, the economic plans involve an assessment by Government of the demands of the country for certain goods and the licensing of industry is based on such projection of demands. Experience has shown that this is a more complicated task than was thought initially. If we were a monolithic state with the Government having complete control over all aspects of production and distribution, the problem would not have been very difficult, although experience in Russia shows that even under these circumstances a number of complications do arise. But in a mixed economy where many decisions are left to hundreds, thousands and in many cases millions of private individuals, the projection of demands is an extremely complicated task. Moreover, difficulties in implementation arise which cannot always be foreseen—difficulties, for instance, both of foreign exchange and of internal finance. We were thus completely out in our projection of the demand for coal during the Third Five Year Plan. In certain cases, on the basis of projection of demands, imports were admitted to an extent which caused serious difficulties to indigenous producers. It is not a matter of surprise that a bureaucracy, which had no training in economic plans, should commit serious mistakes in this field.

But apart from efficiency the question of integrity also raises its head. Human nature is pretty much the same in all countries and the greater the power that is vested in an Official the greater the temptation to misuse it. This is not an original sin in India. If we are to get out of the present confusion and the opportunity it provides for serious temptation, it is necessary that we should reduce to the absolute minimum the area of controls and powers vested in Government officials.

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It is impossible to survey the contemporary scene of administration in India without some reference to inflation and its consequences. Time was when one could say with absolute certainty that a Government official could always be depended upon to show meticulous attention to the duties of his office. Indeed it was considered an honour and a privilege to work for the Government. We are now witnessing a situation in which there are mass applications for casual leave and wholesale absenteeism from Government offices. One has to examine why the situation has arisen. It would be fatuous to put all this down just to general indiscipline. The more basic question is why this indiscipline has reared its ugly head amongst Government servants. I have little doubt in my mind that one of the dominant reasons is the rising cost of living and the growing distress that it is causing amongst the large body of Government servants. We are here caught in a tragic dilemma. The dilemma consists in this that on the one hand, for reasons for which we are not to be blamed, we have to spend enormous sums of money on defence which in the purely economic sense is unproductive, and on the other hand have to keep up a tempo of developmental activities, not merely to increase the standard of living but to prevent it from going down against the pressure of a rapidly rising population.

I cannot myself suggest an easy solution for this dilemma; but the least dangerous of any solutions that can be thought of is to scale down development to the level justified by available resources. This is a sad conclusion but inevitable in present circumstances. I am convinced that if we try to force the pace of development—and this would necessarily involve, whatever Government may say, the creation of money through deficit financing—the result would be rapid inflation, gathering misery and increasing unrest, with shattering effect on the standards of administration.

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From certain points of view this is perhaps not a very good time to take a view about the possibilities of the future in the administrative field in India. The Administrative Reforms Commission has been functioning for some months but its main report will not be ready for quite some time. It is difficult, both from its composition and from such news as is available about its dialogue with people who have tendered evidence before it, to prognosticate whether the report will deal courageously with the basic causes leading to the present administrative malaise. Moreover, we are in the throes of an election campaign. The forthcoming election seems somewhat more open than in the past, insofar as it concerns the leadership that it will throw up both in the States and in the Centre. Nevertheless, some indication is called for about what I think will happen in the future.

The first hopeful sign that points to a feeling of some optimism is that there is a strong feeling in the country against inefficiency, against corruption, against everything that makes a mockery of the ideals that the founders of the constitution had in mind. So long as this vigorous conscience is stirring in the country there is no reason to lose hope. In the second place I believe that there are chances that in the near future, though not perhaps immediately after the forthcoming election, a younger and more dynamic leadership than we have at present might emerge. Today the leadership consists of a number of disparate personalities, whose only common link is that they took part in the freedom campaign. Many of these personalities are tired, their attitudes are fixed, and it is doing them no injustice to say that the country has more than settled its obligation to them for the services rendered by them in the past.

We want people who are younger in spirit and in outlook, more responsive to the urges of the new generation that is growing so rapidly in numbers and more dynamic and flexible in its thinking. Withal we want more vigorous leadership. The history of our country, whether during the Hindu period, the Muslim period or the British period has shown that whenever there is vigorous leadership the country has made progress. What we are witnessing today is an interplay of social and political forces that leads to divided and somewhat confused leadership. I have the feeling that this stage will pass. We are today in low waters but if we are to believe in our history we will rise up and revive the great traditions of our past.

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Shri H. V. R. Iengar (born 1902) had a brilliant academic career. He entered the Indian Civil Service in 1926 and was posted as an Assistant Collector of a district in the erstwhile Bombay Presidency. He rose rapidly, serving with distinction in many capacities. He was the first Indian to become a full-fledged Finance Secretary in that Presidency. He was also Secretary for the Revenue and Home Departments. In 1944 he was transferred to the Central Government where he held various senior and responsible posts, including that of the Secretary of the Constituent Assembly, Principal Private Secretary to the Prime Minister, Home Secretary, and Secretary to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. In 1956 he became Chairman of the State Bank of India. He retired from Government service in 1957 and became the Governor of the Reserve Bank of India. After retirement from the Bank in 1962, he joined the well-known industrial complex of South India, the E.I.D.-Parry Group, as its Chairman and simultaneously became Chairman of the Indian Aluminium Company.

Shri Iengar is an administrator of outstanding ability, with a flair for organisation. It was this trait which made Jawaharlal Nehru select him as his first Principal Secretary on the eve of India's independence. His achievements in that post and thereafter as the Home Secretary and Governor of the Reserve Bank of India are well-known.

Shri Iengar is a prolific writer on political, constitutional and administrative problems, contributing regularly to leading newspapers in India. The present book is a collection of his lectures on Indian History which he delivered in 1966 at the Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan.

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